

## ***Performance Management Frequently Asked Questions***

### **PERFORMANCE PLANNING (Using the Employee Work Profile Form)**

#### **Should performance expectations be the same for similarly classified employees?**

At least some performance expectations could be similar for many employees, particularly those in classifications with very standard types of responsibilities (e.g. correctional officers, psych attendants, family case managers). But even employees who have highly standardized job descriptions still have individual assignments and responsibilities, or different developmental needs. They may also be performing this work under highly differing circumstances, based on geographic location or client population. These circumstances could necessitate some differences in expectations. Employees should be allowed wherever possible to participate in the process of developing their performance expectations and identifying their personal/professional developmental needs.

#### **How do you avoid discrimination issues when you have different performance standards for your subordinates in the same classification?**

Employees in similar classifications may still perform somewhat different work, depending on differing circumstances. Performance expectations should be tied to the specific outcomes for which those individual employees are responsible for making happen.

#### **Are we limited to six (6) performance expectations?**

We generally recommend that performance expectations focus on key outcomes or responsibilities, and this generally should not exceed six. This allows you to focus resources on what is most important or of highest priority. Expanding expectations beyond six increases the burden on supervisors to follow up and track employee performance and can make this process unnecessarily complicated.

#### **Can I just transfer the Areas of Responsibility from the old Individual Position Description to serve as Performance Expectations for my employees?**

Not exactly. You can use the old forms' Areas of Responsibility as a guide to develop new performance expectations. In some cases, you may determine that they are all appropriate and that you can use them. In other cases, you may wish to delete them, tweak them, or start from scratch. Remember that well-developed performance expectations are the basis for successful performance management and that many employees must be held accountable for successful outcomes, not just satisfactory performance of day-to-day tasks. Well-developed performance expectations have clearly defined measurements for all elements of performance that will be considered in evaluation of employee performance, including (but not limited to) cost, quality, timeliness, and/or quantity.

### **What do you do if an employee won't sign their work profile form?**

Begin the process by engaging in a dialogue with the employee about what specifically they disagree with. Make a good faith attempt to address and resolve that disagreement. If unable to resolve the disagreement, then have a neutral witness (such as an HR person or a supervisor from a different area) sign the work profile so that you have acknowledgement that the employee has been given their performance expectations.

### **Can I set new General Factors for my employees if I don't like the ones on the form?**

More than likely not. There are universal General Factors for all state employees, and then there are discretionary General Factors that are selected by your agency's leadership. These are aligned with your agency's strategic plan and vision. You cannot select additional or different General Factors if your agency has selected General Factors. If your agency has not selected General Factors, you may be able to identify General Factors for your employees. We recommend that you consult with State Personnel or the human resource representative in your agency.

### **Do we have to use the same General Factors for everyone in the same classification?**

All employees in the same classification in the same work unit should have the same general factors.

### **What is the difference between goals and performance expectations?**

Performance expectations are the total set of specific employee responsibilities. Goals are simply a sub-set of those responsibilities. For some groups of employees, performance expectations are largely the accomplishment of goals and objectives, while for other groups of employees what is most important is that they perform key daily tasks and duties at a high level of performance.

### **I would not list expectations that are not important, so why do I need to rank order them?**

Putting your performance expectations in order of importance helps clarify priorities for both the supervisor and the employee. It is also very important that critical expectations be identified at the beginning of the year and that the employee clearly understand that one or more of their expectations are of critical importance.

### **What is the purpose of the reviewer line on the Work Profile form?**

All of the new forms contain a signature line for a Reviewer. This allows agencies or individual supervisors a chance to review these documents for a variety of reasons. For the Work Profile, supervisors may want to review them to ensure that expectations are relevant to the agency mission or consistent with agency goals, are attainable, yet challenging and are job-related and non-discriminatory.

### **Can we make changes to the Work Profile throughout the year?**

The Work Profile can be viewed as a “living” document. Due to changing circumstances it may be appropriate to amend an employee’s performance expectations at some point in the year. This could be the addition of a mid-year expectation that is highly important, or it could be the deletion of an existing expectation. Supervisors may also need to clarify the standards for an expectation that they wrote at the beginning of the year.

## **ONGOING COMMUNICATION AND DOCUMENTATION**

### **Do fact file entries have to be signed?**

The primary purpose of an employee fact file is to serve as a memory aid. Supervisors need to keep regular documentation of all levels of employee performance throughout the review period in order to create a fair and accurate appraisal at the end of the review period. Getting an employees’ signatures on all fact file entries is a recommended management practice because it is a great way to document that the supervisor is informing the employee of opportunities to improve as well as giving the employee positive feedback.

### **Can a fact file be kept electronically?**

Yes. As long as other employees cannot access the fact file information, you may keep these records/notes electronically. All electronic documentation must be made available to employees for review just like hard copy documentation. Hard copies of this documentation should be made at the end of the year to be kept with the rest of the employee’s fact files.

### **Do I need to go over fact files every week with my employees?**

No, you should regularly review fact file entries with your employees at appropriate intervals but there are no specific requirements regarding the frequency of the reviews. However, if you have a negative entry or a problem that needs to be addressed, you should not wait to address that type of issue.

### **Can you have a witness attend a meeting between you and your employee to discuss how they can improve performance?**

Employees are only entitled to witnesses in a pre-deprivation meeting, so employees shall not be permitted to bring a witness to a performance counseling session. We also do not recommend that management invite a witness to these meetings unless there is a very strong belief that it will be a highly contentious meeting.

### **What if an employee refuses to sign a fact file entry (or performance evaluation)?**

Remind them that their signature means only that they received the information, not that they agree with it. If they still refuse to sign: bring in a neutral witness (such as an HR person or a supervisor from a different area) and offer them a second chance to sign the document. When they refuse, cover the offensive entry and have the witness write “Refused to Sign” and sign and date it themselves.

### **Do I have to transfer a fact file if a person moves to another area or facility?**

It is a good idea and especially helpful for a manager if they are able to view an employee's most recent fact file entries, so we recommend sending the current file to the new supervisor. This will allow the new supervisor to become familiar with performance strengths as well as any coaching/training needs of their new employee. If you choose to transfer active fact files, remember you must do so for all departing employees. In addition, it is recommended that you evaluate and complete a special performance appraisal report on all departing employees even if they are just transferring to another division of the agency.

### **PERFORMANCE EVALUATION (Using the Performance Appraisal Reports)**

#### **After I have completed a performance appraisal, what is the order of signatures?**

The employee should be the last signature on the form. Once the appraisal is complete, it should be sent to the agency-designated Reviewer. This will be either an intermediate supervisor or human resources. It will be reviewed for clarity, documentation, and consistency at this point. It then goes to the Appointing Authority, or his/her designee, for signature before being presented to the employee.

#### **Do we still do performance appraisals at 6 months to grant permanent status?**

Yes, for full- or part-time employees in merit positions. Use the Employee Performance Appraisal Report form to do the six month appraisal. At this time, you will either grant the employee permanent status or you will request an extension of their working test period. We recommend that you use the Interim Performance Appraisal at three months to advise employees of how they are doing.

#### **How do I address attendance issues?**

If an employee has had Unauthorized Leave or has discipline for attendance issues, we recommend that you use the Teamwork general factor and evaluate them as not meeting expectations. Simply indicate in the comment area for that general factor, "This issue is being addressed through progressive discipline." The idea here is that an employee is not contributing to the team if their absence is creating a problem at work.

If an employee has frequent attendance issues, but is not in discipline, you cannot penalize them for using time that they are entitled to use. But that does not mean that you cannot continue to hold them fully accountable for meeting all of their performance expectations. If their absence is interfering with their ability to meet their performance expectations, you can evaluate them as not meeting those expectations.

#### **How do I come up with a Section Rating or an Overall Performance Rating?**

To begin with, your Section and Overall Ratings must be grounded in valid ratings for each individual performance expectation and general factors. For these to be valid, you must have set clear expectations and have provided sufficient documentation and performance observations to justify the ratings you are giving. Once the individual ratings are completed, you use these to develop the larger picture of the employee's performance.

If all expectations are of relatively similar importance, you may roughly average the individual ratings to determine the section and overall ratings. If some expectations are far more important than others, you will give these greater weight in determining the section and overall ratings. Whichever method you employ, you must be consistent and apply the same reasoning to all of your evaluations.

## **WORK IMPROVEMENT PLANS**

### **When can I put an employee on a Work Improvement Plan? Do I need to wait until their annual evaluation?**

You can put an employee on a work improvement plan at any point in the appraisal process when you determine that an employee is unable to meet their expectations. Keep in mind that you should have documentation to back up the ratings that have caused the employee to be placed on the work improvement plan.

### **How does the work improvement plan fit into the discipline cycle? When might an employee go from one to the other?**

A work improvement plan is not discipline. It is used when an employee exhibits an inability to do their job and meet the performance expectations. If an employee is unwilling to do their job, this must be addressed with discipline. If you are unsure whether the problem is an inability or an unwillingness, you may initially treat the problem as an inability and use the work improvement plan process.

Once an employee has successfully completed a work improvement plan, then s/he has demonstrated the capability to perform the work. If the problem recurs, it is most likely the result of an unwillingness and you would then move to discipline to address the problem.